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Hon. Steve Israel

In the House of Representatives

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Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill. The distinguished chairman of the committee, whom I have a very strong respect for, opened this debate by saying that in the global war on terror, we cannot read terrorists their Miranda rights. No one has said that. No one has proposed it. No one has suggested it. That is not what is being debated here. That is not what we should debate here. It is absurd.

When it comes to terrorists planning mass murder on the American people, I want to find them. I want to capture them. I want to kill them. I want to try them. If they are found guilty, I want to kill them. I believe in capital punishment for terrorists perpetrating genocide.

But because I think that we should fight and kill terrorists, I want there to be fewer of them to fight and kill. This bill says to potential terrorists, the U.S. is surrendering the moral high ground. It is unilaterally relaxing the Geneva Conventions, that we are willing to keep people locked up indefinitely without a trial.

And since I believe in executing people found guilty of perpetrating or planning a genocide on the American people, I want to make sure we are executing the right terrorists. Government is imperfect. We make mistakes. How do I know? Katrina. We lose records. How do I know? The long line of veterans at my district office who cannot get their back pay because we lost their records.

When it comes to capital punishment for terrorists, I want to make sure that we are giving them the proper trial, that we are getting the facts. If I am willing to execute them, I want to make sure it is based on fact.

And because I believe we should fight and kill terrorists, I also know that

Americans in that fight are going to be caught; and I want them treated by the same standards that we would treat our enemy's prisoners. I do not want any one of our military people to be subject to the whims and the arbitrariness of a current interpretation by a foreign enemy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by suggesting and telling my colleagues that I recently asked a service member, who received a Bronze Star for valor in Fallujah, what he thought about this. He said, Congressman, I do not think our enemies really care about the Geneva Conventions, but I am fighting for my country because I care about morality, because I care about strong values, because this is a good country that leads the way, and I want to continue leading the way.

If I am asking young men and women to die for what we stand for, I want to stand for something. If I am asking people to fight to kill terrorists, I want to be in the pursuit of our values, not the terrorist's values.